

## PLOT DEVELOPMENT IN CLASSICAL INDIAN DRAMA

## (I)

As yet very little research has been carried out in the reciprocal relationship between the *kāvya*-theorist and the poet himself. We are, indeed, badly informed regarding the importance which poetic rules may have had, to the latter. We are, however, entitled to assume that, at the outset, theoretical prescriptions, influenced « literature to be seen » (*drśya*), the drama, to a greater extent than they influenced « literature to be heard » (*śrāvya*). The play-wright, especially the beginner, would naturally require more guidance and help than the epic and lyrical poet. Thus the *Nāṭyaśāstra* gives in detail all the points which a dramatist had to take into account when constructing the plot of a play. According to Bharata's rules, the sequence of dramatic incidents was to be smooth, regulated, as it were, step by step. In the beginning of the drama, embedded in the dialogues of the First Act, lies the germ (*bīja*) which is difficult to discover at first, but which grows more and more and, finally, toward the end of the play, appears as the ripened fruit (*phala*), the reward of all efforts.

It is characteristic of the Western as well as of the Indian theatre that the line of plot development aims at a definite goal and is, moreover, dependent on the effectiveness of its many components. In classical Indian drama this line extends from the very first manifestation of the *bīja* up to the end of the play (*kārya*), which, as is well-known, must always be happy. It is incumbent on the author to either slow down or speed up the various parts of the plot and thus to present an interesting plot, the action of which moves neither too quickly nor too slowly. These theories will here only be summarized. The main purpose of this article is to illustrate the dramaturgic rules for the basic plot-structure with an analysis of *Mālavikāgnimitra*, which is generally considered to be Kālidāsa's earliest dramatic work. I have chosen the work of a young poet since, as I have already mentioned, the theorists must have had a much greater influence on a beginner, thereby forcing him to follow

their rules, than they would have had on a mature and experienced poet<sup>1</sup>.

Autoritative instructions concerning the correct treatment of plot are given in Chapter XXI of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*<sup>2</sup> and Chapter I of Dhanamjaya's *Daśarūpaka*<sup>3</sup> which, as regards these instructions, follows the *Nāṭyaśāstra* rather closely<sup>4</sup>. Plot, denoted by different terms such as (*iti*)*vr̥tta*, *vastu* or *artha*, forms the body (*śarīra*) of the play<sup>5</sup> and comprises the main action (*ādhikārikam itivṛttam*), i.e., everything that promotes the attainment of the goal and facilitates the ripening of the *bīja*, and the incidental action (*prāsaṅgikam* or *ānusaṅgikam itivṛttam*) of the play<sup>6</sup>. The main story is thus essential to permit the hero to reach his ultimate goal, while the episodes, which deal with incidents of minor importance, only indirectly further the development of the story.

The matter of a drama consists of five elements (*arthaprakṛti*): the *bīja*, which is sown at the beginning of the play and is, like the other elements, recognized by the connoisseur by more or less well-hidden hints and allusive remarks; secondly, the *bindu*, the « drop »; thirdly, the *patākā*, the great episode; fourthly, the *prakarī*, the little episode; and lastly, the *kārya*, « the thing to be achieved », i.e., the final goal towards which all the action of the play is directed. Among these it is the function of the *bindu* not to allow the flow of incidents to stop<sup>7</sup>, but to act like a drop of oil, lubricating the machinery of action whenever its forward movement threatens to stagnate. By the name of *patākā*, the great episode, Bharata denoted an action based on some story other than that of the principal action, but which promotes the leading theme (*pradhāna*) of the play<sup>8</sup>. Thus it tends to amalgamate with the general tendencies of the drama. *Prakarī*, on the other hand, the little episode, shows only a slight connection with the main action. Here the development of incidents remains confined to itself<sup>9</sup> and contributes in no way

1. A. B. Keith early noted in *The Sanskrit Drama* that the later dramas by Kālidāsa, Vikramorvaśi and Sakuntalā, show a marked advance in imagination and a far more perfect art (p. 156f.).

2. The edition quoted here is MANMOHAN GHOSH, *The Nāṭyaśāstra Ascribed to Bharata-Muni*, Vol. I, Calcutta 1967 (2nd ed.).

3. My edition is GEORGE C. O. HAAS, *The Daśarūpa*, Delhi-Varanasi-Patna 1962 (reprint).

4. For other treatises on drama or works containing chapters on it cf. STEN KONOW, *Das Drama*, p. 3 and S. LÉVI, *Le Théâtre Indien*, p. 11ff. and A. K. WARDER, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, Vol. I, Delhi-Patna-Varanasi 1972, p. 68ff.

5. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 1.

6. *Ibid.*, 2-5. *Daśar.* 18-20.

7. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 23. As will be seen in our analysis of *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the *bindu* can appear several times in one and the same play. A. K. Warder rightly remarks that the *bindu* has been variously explained later as the metaphor of a drop of oil spreading out on water or of dripping water feeding the « seed » (*ibid.*, p. 55).

8. *Ibid.*, 24.

9. *Ibid.*, 25.

to the realization of the final goal of the drama. Being a self-contained element, it only widens the frame of the events shown on the stage.

Besides these five *arthaprakṛtis*, the Indian dramaturges distinguish five *avasthās*, i.e., five « stages » or « situations ». They concern the *kāraka*, i.e., the hero, who, in the course of the play, is to attain a definite object or goal. This goal (*artha*) is often the conquest of a beloved woman, as is the case in *Mālavikāgnimitra*, the subjection of an enemy after a long struggle, and the like. Bharata's prescriptions only state that this goal must lie within the sphere of the three aims of man, namely *dharma* (religion), *artha* (material gain), and *kāma* (love). A fourth aim, *mokṣa* (striving for liberation), has been added by later writers on Sanskrit poetics. The stages which the hero of a drama must successively pass are: (*pr*)*ārambha*, *prayatna*, *prāptisambhava*<sup>10</sup>, *niyatā phala-prāpti*<sup>11</sup> and *phalayoga*<sup>12</sup>. In (*pr*)*ārambha*, the « beginning », the *bīja* at first only awakens the desire (*autsukya*) of the hero<sup>13</sup>, who, afterwards, has to strive more and more towards union with the fruit (*phalayoga*). In the state of *prayatna*, « endeavour », the interest of the hero in the object has already increased to the full; he does not yet know how to reach his goal, but now takes the first steps towards achieving it<sup>14</sup>. A first small gain (*īṣatprāpti*)<sup>15</sup> is granted in the next situation, that of *prāptisambhava*, « the possibility (of reaching the goal) »<sup>16</sup>. Connoisseurs recognize it in some sentiment (*bhāva*) shown by the object<sup>17</sup> of the hero's attentions. In this *avasthā* the hero's hope (*prāptyāśā*) manifests itself for the first time more clearly. At the stage called *niyatā phala-prāpti* he then approaches his goal with fuller assurance<sup>18</sup>, while in *phalayoga*, « the union with the fruit », the last stage, he is finally allowed to reap the full reward of his endeavours<sup>19</sup>.

In addition to these *avasthās* which, by characterising the hero's attitudes, enter, as it were, more deeply into the psychology of the hero, and the five *arthaprakṛtis*, referring to the action of the play itself, Indian theorists also mention « junctures », the so-called *saṃdhis*. They are part of the action<sup>20</sup>, but concern more the artistic side of the play. For it is just this scale of the five *saṃdhis* and their subdivisions which

10. Also called *prāptyāśā*.

11. Also called *niyatāpti*.

12. Also called *phalaprāpti*.

13. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 9. *Daśar.* I, 29.

14. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 10. *Daśar.* I, 30.

15. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 11a.

16. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 11. *Daśar.* I, 31.

17. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 11.

18. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 12. *Daśar.* I, 32 (*prāptir niyatāptiḥ suniścita*).

19. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 13. *Daśar.* I, 33.

20. According to A. B. Keith the *saṃdhis* carry each of the stages of the action to its natural close, *ibid.*, p. 298.

provide the poet with the necessary points of support when constructing his drama, and help him to master the story he has chosen. This « junctures » act as a suitable means of linking the various elements of the play together. Again the dramaturges stick to the traditional number of five. It is difficult to account for the fact that the theorists enumerate five *saṃdhis*, five *avasthās* and, again, five *arthaprakṛtis*. Unfortunately no text older than the *Nāṭyaśāstra* has been preserved, and Bharatamuni himself throws no light on this question. It seems reasonable to assume that the three groups of five constituents originally represented three separate, though allied, doctrines of different dramaturgical schools which were later united into one single system, as has happened several times in the history of Sanskrit poetics.

According to the *saṃdhi*-theory every play has to begin with the *mukha*, the « opening »<sup>21</sup> (literally, the « mouth » of the body of the play)<sup>22</sup>. By this expression the theorists understand the first part of the drama in which the germ begins to grow and, as we are told, makes many things (*artha*) and sentiments (*rasa*)<sup>23</sup> possible. Opposed to this « opening » is the following part of the play, the « counter-opening », *pratimukha*<sup>24</sup> in which the sown (*nyasta*) germ begins to sprout and emerges above the surface, often plainly visible, but sometimes not so easy to detect<sup>25</sup>. In the next *saṃdhi*, which is called *garbha*, the growing « embryo »<sup>26</sup>, the young plant approaches the moment of bursting into flower; the play is nearing its climax. The hero reaches his object, loses it and attempts to find it again<sup>27</sup>. The goal is near, the object almost obtained, when suddenly, in the fourth juncture, *vimarśa*<sup>28</sup>, « examination »<sup>29</sup>, a crisis arises. Moments of uncertainty and critical deliberation delay the hitherto more or less steady progress of the action. Betrayal, anger, passion or an unexpected incident lead to serious doubts<sup>30</sup>. But, ultimately, there is what is indispensable to an Indian drama the *nirvahaṇa* or « dénouement »<sup>31</sup>. The five junctures<sup>32</sup> are now brought toge-

21. S. Lévi, *ibid.*, translates: *exposition*.

22. This is the actual plot of the play; cf. p. 134.

23. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 38. *Daśar.* I, 37.

24. S. Lévi: *contre-exposition*, A. B. Keith and M. Ghosh: *progression*, A. K. WARDER: *re-opening*.

25. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 39. *Daśar.* I, 51.

26. A. B. Keith and M. Ghosh: *development*.

27. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 40. *Daśar.* I, 66.

28. *Daśar.* I, 81: *avamarśa*.

29. A. B. Keith and M. Ghosh: *pause*, A. K. WARDER: *obstacle* (*avamarśa*) or *pause* (*vimarśa*).

30. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 41. *Daśar.* I, 81.

31. A. B. Keith, M. Gosh and A. K. Warder: *conclusion*.

32. For the parallelism between the *arthaprakṛtis* and the *saṃdhis* and the lack of parallelism between the *arthaprakṛtis* and the *avasthās* in the Indian theory of dramatic art cf. A. B. Keith, *ibid.*, pp. 298 and 299.

ther<sup>33</sup>, and the knot which had been tied by the entangling threads of the plot, is finally loosened.

Not all of the above-mentioned five *saṃdhis* are, however, necessary for each type of play. A *nāṭaka* must, as a rule, contain all the *saṃdhis*, distributed throughout the various acts, but only four *saṃdhis* are prescribed for plays belonging to the class known as *ḍima*<sup>34</sup> and three for those called *ihāmṛga*<sup>35</sup>. Comedies (*prahasana*) have only two junctures, namely *mukha* and *nirvaṇa*. The *saṃdhis*, the regular sequence of which all play-wrights were expected to observe, are each subdivided into *aṅgas* (« limbs »). These *aṅgas*, consist of linguistic formulations of certain dramatic moments prescribed by the dramaturges and are, in that capacity, comparable with the poetic figures of the *kāvya*<sup>36</sup>. I leave, however, the description of these details aside, as this would go far beyond the scope of this paper. Moreover, we may doubt whether a writer would really allow his imagination and poetical freedom to be hampered by more than a moderate number of rules<sup>37</sup>.

## (II)

I shall now try to illustrate the manner in which all these rules have been put into practice by the play-wright and I take as an example Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra*, a drama in five acts<sup>38</sup>. I shall here summarize the argument of the play, point out the dramatic devices employed by Kālidāsa and thus try to give an analysis of the structure and development of plot in this drama. In doing so, I am, for the most part, following Kāṭa(ya)vema's commentary, the *Kumāragirirājīavyākhyāna*<sup>39</sup>,

33. *Nāṭyaś.* XXI, 42. *Daśar.* I, 96.

34. The *ḍima*, consisting of four acts, takes its plot from tradition and its heroes are well-known mythical or legendary personalities. Of the five junctures, that of *vimarśa* is wanting; cf. Sten Konow, *ibid.*, p. 30.

35. A play in four acts, the contents of which are mixed; that is to say, partly traditional, partly invented; cf. *ibid.*, p. 29.

36. Daṇḍin seems to hint at this fact when stating in *Kāvyaadarśa* II, 367:

yac ca s a n d h y a ṅ g a - v r t t y a ṅ g a - l a k ṣ a ṇ ā d y ā g a m ā n t a r e /  
vyāvarṇitam idaṁ ceṣṭam alaṅkāratayaiva naḥ //

Cf. also EDWIN GEROW, *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*, The Hague-Paris 1971, p. 33, note 70.

37. Except for the First Act, I also refrain from treating the *aṅgas* in the following analysis of *Mālavikāgnimitra*.

38. P. Thieme has drawn attention to the fact that this drama wird von Kālidāsa selbst als *nāṭaka* bezeichnet, die spätere Kunsttheorie hätte es unter die *nāṭikās* einordnen sollen. Historisch gehört es aber der durch Bhāsa « *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* » usw. vertretenen Unterabteilung des « *höfischen prakaraṇa* » an (*Das indische Theater*, p. 87, in: *Fernöstliches Theater*, hrsgg. von H. KINDERMANN, Stuttgart 1966).

39. My edition is *Mālavikāgnimitram. śrī-Kāṭayavema-bhūpa-viracitena Kumāragirirājīyena vyākhyānena ṭippaṇī-pāṭhāntara-pātra-paricayādibhiṣca sametam*, NSP, Bombay 1950 (9th edition).

in which careful attention is paid to all the above-mentioned junctures, phases of action and states in which the hero finds himself. Kāṭaya-vema's notes agree so well with the instructions given by Bharata (and Dhanamjaya) that we can safely accept his interpretations, though his comments may, of course, represent only one among many other possible explanations<sup>40</sup>.

In the Introduction to *Mālavikāgnimitra* the audience is informed that Mālavikā, the heroine of the drama, has joined the court of King Agnimitra in a rather unusual way. One day her brother Mādhavasena, the cousin of the Prince of Vidarbha, had set out, together with Mālavikā and a great retinue, in order to establish family-ties with Agnimitra. On their way the travellers are suddenly attacked by the frontier-guards of the Prince of Vidarbha. Mādhavasena is taken prisoner and Mālavikā finds her first refuge with Virasena, a high officer commanding a frontier fortress near the banks of the Narmadā. He is a brother to Queen Dhāriṇī, the elder Consort of King Agnimitra, and sends the girl, who seems to have outstanding talents for music and dance, to his sister. There, at the court of Agnimitra, careful instruction is given to her in the art of music and dancing. But the Queen anxiously withholds her protégée from the sight of the King.

### First Act

In the Prelude to the First Act we listen to the conversation between two maids, Bakulāvalikā and Kaumudikā. Bakulāvalikā has been given orders by Queen Dhāriṇī to procure information from Gaṇadāsa, the dancing-master, about his pupil Mālavikā's progress. From the conversation between the two maids we learn that King Agnimitra has so far never seen Mālavikā, as the Queen has constantly hidden her from his sight. Nevertheless, the King discovers her once when, accompanied by the Queen, he sees her in a new picture in his picture gallery, and from this moment takes a vivid interest in her.

From the report of Bakulāvalikā that Mālavikā is concealed from the King, we at once guess the King's longing for Mālavikā. Here the *bīja*<sup>41</sup> manifests itself for the first time.

40. Kāṭayavema was the son of Kāṭa Bhūpa and Minister of King Vasantarāja of Kumāragiri, one of the petty rulers known under the name of Redḍis, who divided the country after the downfall of the Cālukya and Cola kingdoms. A Komāragiri Vema Redḍi is mentioned as having reigned at Koṇḍaviḍu, 1381-95 (J. Eggeling, *Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, Part VII, London 1904, p. 1575 ff.).

41. See Kāṭayavema's commentary, p. 6: 'apuvvā iam dāriā' ity ārabhya 'daṃsa-napahādo rakkhīadi' ityantena vākyakadambakēna gamyamāno mālavikāgocaro rājño 'bhilāṣo 'tra nātake bījam ity anusaṃdheyam.

In Act I proper, we meet King Agnimitra himself. After discussing with his minister Vāhataka what steps are to be taken against the Prince of Vidarbha and ordering the despatch of an army, his « minister for other affairs », those of love, the Vidūṣaka, comes to see him. Immediately the King requests his advice about how to meet Mālavikā, whose portrait has made such a deep impression upon him. The Vidūṣaka confides to him that, on his own account, he has already made provisions for that and that the King will shortly be able to enjoy the fruit of his cunning.

Soon it appears that the Vidūṣaka has provoked a quarrel between the two dancing-masters, Gaṇadāsa and Haradatta. They seek help and both appeal to the King, whom they expect to decide, as an impartial judge, on their respective qualifications and shortcomings. At this moment, Queen Dhārīṇī and Kauṣikī enter the stage, and the decision is made to entrust the latter, a Buddhist nun and expert in the Fine Arts, with the difficult task of being the arbitrator. All agree that both dancing-masters should demonstrate their achievements in practice: each of them should choose one of his pupils and let her execute a difficult dance. At the first beat of the big drums, the party withdraws to the concert-hall where the competition is to take place.

Here we have *ārambha*<sup>42</sup>: The King feels a longing for Mālavikā. The play begins.

Opening: *mukha*<sup>43</sup>.

Queen Dhārīṇī herself has no interest in the competition between the two teachers. Discontented, she turns away from the King. Here, according to the commentator, the action threatens to stop: it seems doubtful, at least for a while, whether the dancing-competition, which the King is so anxious to see, will really take place. Only the encouraging words of the Vidūṣaka advance the development: they prepare the *bindu*<sup>44</sup> which, later on, will turn out to be of great utility. What here appears merely as a plan, will be realized in Act II.

42. See *ibid.*, p. 11: *atra gamyamānaṃ rājño mālavikādarśana utsukyaṃ ārambhō nāma prathamāvastheti mantavyam.*

43. See *ibid.*, p. 11: *atra bījārambhayoḥ samanvayān mukha-saṃdhir ity anusaṃdheyam.*

44. See *ibid.*, p. 18: *atra devīkopena vastuvicchede prāpte vidūṣakakṛtāṃ prot-sāhanam uttarāṅkopayogitvenāvicchedakāraṇatvād bindur ity anusaṃdheyam.*



## Second Act

The spectator witnesses the first part of the competition planned in Act I. Being older than his rival, Gaṇadāsa is the first to be allowed to demonstrate the art of his school. He chooses Mālavikā who, in spite of having been his pupil only for a short time, performs a very difficult dance.

The King sees her now for the first time and is enchanted with her uncommon beauty. She appears even more beautiful than in the picture. When she leaves the stage, the King hardly feels inclined to wait to see the performance of Haradatta, Gaṇadāsa's rival. The call of the heralds announces noon and Agni-mitra politely puts off the second part of the programme till the following day.

By giving preference to Gaṇadāsa, the King « strives » to see Mālavikā at once. This is *prayatna*<sup>45</sup>.

Counter-opening: *pratimukha*<sup>46</sup>.

After Mālavikā has withdrawn, the King's desire increases to the utmost. Again this longing becomes the *bindu*<sup>47</sup>; it facilitates the development of the plot and is the cause of the events in Act III.

## Third Act

In the Prelude to Act III Samāhitikā, a female servant, is sent out to fetch a lemon from the orchard. There she opens a conversation with the gardener, who is curious to learn the news from court. Samāhitikā reports the latest events: the quarrel between the two dancing-masters and the King's love

45. See *ibid.*, p. 23: 'bhagavati atra bhavatoḥ' ityādinā 'gaṇadāsaḥ puraskāram arthāt' ityantena pratīyamānaṃ rājñā upāyato mālavikādarśanapravartanaṃ prayatno nāma dvitīyāvasthitiḥ iti mantavyam.

46. See *ibid.*, p. 23: atra binduprayatnayoh samanvayāt pratimukha-saṃdhir ity anusandheyam.

47. See *ibid.*, p. 32: (atrāṅke) mālavikāyā niṣkramaṇeṇa kathāvicchede sati sarvāntahpuretyādinā gamyamāno rājño 'bhilāṣātiśaya uttarāṅkakathāhetutvād bindur ity anusandheyam.



for Mālavikā. She assumes that Mālavikā, too, feels a great longing, for during the last few days the girl has become pale and thin.

Both withdraw and, at the beginning of Act III, the King and the Vidūṣaka enter the stage.

After a short conversation the friends proceed to the royal pleasure-garden where Irāvati, the King's second Consort, expects her husband to come and swing. In the meantime Mālavikā also comes into the garden, as the King had asked her to make the Aśoka tree put forth blossoms by touching it with her feet. While her confidante, Bakulāvalikā, adorns her with the precious anklets, the *nūparas*, the King and the Vidūṣaka hide themselves behind high hedges of creepers and listen to their talk. Now Irāvati, too, accompanied by her maid Nipunikā, arrives in the garden. Looking for the King, but not seeing him, she discovers Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā, the latter still busy adorning the feet of Mālavikā. At this moment Mālavikā discloses her secret to Bakulāvalikā: she is enamoured of King Agnimitra. This encourages the listening King. At a fitting moment he and the Vidūṣaka emerge from hiding and step forward to Mālavikā and her maid. Irāvati and Nipunikā stand apart, but are now witness to this private meeting. Quickly and resolutely, the younger Queen comes up to the King and gives him a piece of her mind. She gets more and more angry and neither the King's evasions, nor his request to excuse this perfectly innocent meeting, nor his genuflection, induce Irāvati to forgive him his breach of etiquette.

The Vidūṣaka informs the King of what a messenger sent to Mālavikā has reported to him: Mālavikā is now, while suffering, protected more efficiently than ever. But the messenger has promised to do her best to assure Mālavikā of the King's love. Kāṭayave-ma sees in this communication of the Vidūṣaka the stage of *prāpti yāśā*<sup>48</sup>: The King is cherishing hopes of success.

The growing embryo: *garbha*. In the opinion of Kāṭayave-ma it develops out of the *bindu* and *prāpti yāśā*<sup>49</sup>.

48. See *ibid.*, p. 36: *atra prāptisaṃbhāvanayā prāpti yāśā nāma tṛtiyāvasthā sūcitā*.

49. See *ibid.*, p. 37: *(anayā) prāpti yāśayā bindoḥ samanvāyād garbha-saṃdhir iti mantavyam*.

## Fourth Act

In the beginning of Act IV we see the King in a state of sadness and depression, disappointed by what has happened to him. But soon the Vidūṣaka enters and gives him news of Mālavikā. The incident in the royal garden gave rise to great fury on the part of Irāvati. She informed the first Consort of the King, Dhārīṇī, who, on her own authority, took swift action. She cast Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā into prison and instructed the gaoler, a woman, not to set the prisoners free unless the Queen's own seal-ring were shown to her. Depressed by this terrible news and completely unable to think, the King is unable to find any solution. Now the Vidūṣaka, always ready to help, whispers a secret plan to the King.

While the Vidūṣaka starts to carry out his secret project, King Agnimitra pays a call on Dhārīṇī who, in the meantime, is reported to have fallen ill. He has scarcely inquired about her health, when piercing shrieks are heard from the Vidūṣaka who, almost at the same moment, comes rushing into the room, in a state of terror and fright. While plucking a few flowers for the Queen, a snake has bitten him in the thumb. Now he will certainly die of this bite. The King immediately sends the poor patient to Dhruvasiddha, the doctor. But, unfortunately, Dhruvasiddha is not able to treat him. Only a snake-signet, most efficacious in such accidents, can bring help: Dhruvasiddha, however, does not possess such a ring. Full of compassion and most willingly, Dhārīṇī lends her own ring and the Vidūṣaka recovers at once. In actual fact, he has never been bitten, and his illness was only invented to obtain the seal-ring. Instantly he runs to the gaoler, succeeds in releasing the two girls by showing the Queen's ring and takes them

The clever devices revealed to the King in a whisper cause the events that follow and lead the King into the state of *niyatāpti*<sup>50</sup>, confidence in success.

50. See *ibid.*, p. 60: *atra rājñāḥ karṇe vidūṣakokta upāyo niyamena mālavikā-prāptihetutvān niyatāptir nāma caturthāvasthā sūcitā.*

to a small castle which is pleasantly situated near the shores of the sea. Then he returns and fetches the King.

As the King and the Vidūṣaka approach, they again listen to the girls' conversation. When Mālavikā, lost in deep thought, looks at a portrait of Agnimitra, the King steps forth and declares his love. In the meantime Irāvati, accompanied by Nipunikā, arrives at the castle. Having almost forgiven her husband and not anticipating any unpleasant surprises, she wants to ask the Vidūṣaka about the state of his health. Most unfortunately, she discovers that the King and Mālavikā have just met at this place. Realizing all the intrigues the Vidūṣaka has been guilty of, she becomes furious. Happily the King is able to save himself and the situation, as, just at this moment, a servant enters, who asks the King to go and comfort the youngest princess, Vasulakṣmī, who, when playing ball, had been frightened by a monkey.

Alarmed and afraid of what is to come, especially of the measures that the Queen may take, Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā remain alone on the stage.

Further unpleasant events endanger the hero's gaining the aim: *vimarśa* (or *avamarśa*)<sup>51</sup>.

When, before the end of this Act, a voice from the background announces that the Aśoka tree had burst out into blossoms, Mālavikā follows the gardener to the garden. The commentator interpretes this again as the *bindu*<sup>52</sup> which causes the Prelude to the following Act.

## Fifth Act

In the Prelude a female gardener stands in front of the flowering Aśoka. Confidently she expresses her belief that by now, after

51. See *ibid.*, p. 60: *atra pūrvam prakaristhānoktabijasyānayaṁ niyatāptyā samavayād avamarśo nāma caturthasaṃdhiḥ pratipādita iti mantavyam.*

52. See *ibid.*, p. 77: *idaṁ mālavikākṛtam udyānapālikānusaraṇam uttarāṅko-payuktatvād bindur ity anusandheyam.*

this happy event<sup>53</sup>, the Queen will again be favourably disposed towards Mālavikā. At that instant the Master of Ceremonies, Sā-rasa, passes by and informs the gardener of the great victory obtained over the Prince of Vidarbha and of the liberation of Mādhavasena. He himself has just been in the hall where a letter from Vīrasena, her brother, had been read to the Queen.

At the beginning of Act V the King, escorted by heralds, is just leaving the court of justice, when the Vidūṣaka reports to him most exciting news: Today, by order of Dhāriṇī, Kauṣikī has arrayed the young Mālavikā in a brightly coloured bridal dress. Is this not to be taken as an unmistakable sign that the Queen may now be prepared to comply with the King's most ardent desire?

Indeed, only a few moments later, a message arrives from Dhāriṇī, asking the King to betake himself, together with Mālavikā and a few maids of honour, to the royal garden there to admire the wonder of the Aśoka tree covered all over with blossoms. Most willingly Agnimitra fulfils this request. They meet by the Aśoka tree and politely exchange their first compliments, when suddenly a chamberlain enters and notifies Agnimitra that, among all the other presents sent by the Prince of Vidarbha, there are also two girls, both of them gifted with great artistic talent. They are instantly summoned by the King and, when they appear before the royal party, both girls recognize their previous mistress, Princess Mālavikā.

Now the secret is revealed clearly. Mālavikā is Prince Mādhavasena's sister. An old prophecy is fulfilled according to which Mālavikā, before being united with a worthy husband, would be obliged to serve as a maid for a whole year. Meanwhile good news is

The Vidūṣaka's intimation that Agnimitra, very soon, is going to have a great joy (*ek-kamtasuhido bhavaṃ havissadi*<sup>54</sup>) marks the beginning of *nirva-haṇa*<sup>55</sup>.

Dénouement: *nirva-haṇa*. The different parts of the action are finally brought together.

53. I.e., the blooming of the Aśoka tree.

54. See *Mālavikāgn.* V, 3-4, line 1 (p. 82).

55. Cf. Kāṭyavāsa's commentary, p. 82: *atra mālavikārūpabījānusaṃdhānāt saṃdhir nāma nirva-haṇa-saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati.*

also received about the King's son who, as protector of the freely roaming sacrificial horse, has won a glorious victory over the robber-bands of the Yavanas. All the obstacles to performing the great horse-sacrifice have been removed. The whole court rejoices and the Queen, proud of her victorious son and highly contented, now performs what from the very beginning of the play was determined to happen: She leads Mālavikā into the arms of the King.

Final aim: *kārya*.

Union with the desired object: *phalayaoga*.

End of the play.

### (III)

As Sanskrit commentators on Indian dramas have frequently been over-cunning when demonstrating some technical device, it would be unwise to place an unfaltering trust in all their comments. Nevertheless the short analysis given above seems to indicate that Kālidāsa did, to a large extent, utilize the prescriptions for constructing a plot as laid down in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*<sup>56</sup>. From the Introduction to Act I onward the poet has built up a dramatic happening which unfolds itself gradually and corresponds fairly well to the scheme of phases described in Part (I) of this paper. As parts of the general frame-work of the story to be developed, the prescribed elements certainly served as excellent tools, especially for the young or less talented author, whereas the mature poet could, of course, easily dispense with most of these rules. It is interesting to observe that the action of the drama *Mālavikāgnimitra* takes place within a space of five acts and that, as a matter of fact, the classical drama tends to five *aṅkas*<sup>57</sup>. We know that in Western literature Horace had recommended this number, but in more recent times, the same number was advocated as being ideal by, to mention only one

56. We discover a certain impact of the dramaturgical theories in *Sakuntalā*, too. Here, also, the *arthaprakṛtis* and *avasthās* can be recognized as a sort of dramatic key-element which clearly stand out against the sum total of the events. We may interpret as *prārambha* the meeting between King Duṣyanta and *Sakuntalā* in the peaceful hermitage; as *prayatna* Duṣyanta's efforts to see *Sakuntalā* again; as *prāptisambhava* the short union of the lovers; as *vimarśa* the curse pronounced by Durvāsa which causes Duṣyanta's loss of memory and his inability to remember his wife; and as *nirvahaṇa* the reunion of *Sakuntalā* and Duṣyanta. Cf. *Kalidasa, Sakuntala. Drama in sieben Akten. Aus dem Indischen übertr. und eingel. von HANS LOSCH*, Stuttgart 1960, p. 9. For the treatment of the *avasthās* and *sarṇdhis* in *Sakuntalā* (and *Ratnāvalī*) see also the short description by Keith, *ibid.*, p. 298 f.

57. Later plays, which are intended to be read rather than seen (*dṛśya*), are, however, as a rule longer and can contain up to ten acts.

writer, Gustav Freytag (*Technik des Dramas*)<sup>58</sup>. In Western theories of literature, as in those of India, the opinion prevailed that the first act was to comprise the introduction, the second the enhancement, the third the climax, the fourth the crisis and peripeteia, and the fifth act the solution. It is, however, noteworthy that the Indian play-wright had no choice between a tragic and a happy solution, since, as I have already mentioned, every play had to end happily.

While most classical dramatists probably fulfilled the general scheme of the main constituents of the plot which here have been traced in the structure of *Mālavikāgnimitra*, it remains uncertain whether careful attention has ever been paid to the (*saṃdhy*)*aṅgas*<sup>59</sup>. As has been suggested previously, these minor elements would undoubtedly have hampered the creative imagination (*pratibhā*) of the poet and confined him within too narrow limits. Moreover, the verification of such elements as the *aṅgas* would always prove extremely arbitrary. In the majority of cases quite a number of passages in the dialogues — instead of only one certain passage — can be interpreted as that which contains the hidden hint and thus to be considered as one of the *aṅgas* (*atra saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati*)<sup>60</sup>. It may, however, be noted that, according to Kāṭyavema, Act I of *Mālavikāgnimitra*, which corresponds to the first juncture called *mukha* (« opening »), comprises the following « limbs » (*aṅga*): *upakṣepa* (sowing the germ)<sup>61</sup>, *parikara* (first expansion of the swelling germ)<sup>62</sup>, *parinyāsa* (development of the germ)<sup>63</sup>, *yukti* (weighing of the circumstances)<sup>64</sup>, *vilobhana* (temptation)<sup>65</sup>, *udbheda*

58. Cf. WOLFGANG KAYSER, *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, Bern-Munich 1968 (8th ed.), p. 172.

59. Keith, *ibid.*, p. 299 f., also points out that the sixty-four *aṅgas*, distributed over the various acts, were rather useless in practice. Warder, p. 64, concludes that the limbs are dramatic devices particularly appropriate for developing the conjunctions to which they are assigned, their actual arrangement to be determined by this development in relation to the story and its emotions, with an eye also to the artistic effect of concentration (twos and threes) and climax rather than to mechanical routine.

60. When marking out certain constituents of the plot, the commentators often refer to a certain passage or sentence.

61. See Kāṭyavema's commentary, p. 11: *atra ... bijasya vinyāsād upakṣepo nāma saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati*; cf. *Daśar. I, 39: bijanyāsa upakṣepaḥ*.

62. See *ibid.*, p. 12: *... bijasya bahulikaraṇāt parikara iti saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati*; cf. *Daśar. I, 40: tad(= bīja)bāhulyaṃ parikriyā (= parikaraḥ)*.

63. See *ibid.*, p. 12: *atra bijasya dṛḍhikaraṇāt parinyāso nāma saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati*.

64. See *ibid.*, p. 17: *atra mālavikādarśanasamdehanirṇayād yuktir nāma saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati*.

65. See *ibid.*, p. 20: *atra guṇavattvasya gamyamānatvād vilocanaṃ (sic !) nāma saṃdhyāṅgam uktaṃ bhavati*; cf. *Daśar. I, 42: guṇākhyānaṃ vilobhanaṃ*.

(burst of a secret)<sup>66</sup>, *saṁādhāna* (reappearance of the germ)<sup>67</sup>, and *prāpti* (attainment of happiness)<sup>68</sup>.

One thing is certain: The work of the drama-writer of the classical age was never quite independent. His works were court poetry and really to understand his art and technique more investigations, on these or similar, more detailed lines, are required.

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66. See *ibid.*, p. 20: *atra gūḍhārthodbhedanād udbhedo nāma saṁdhyāṅgam uktaṁ bhavati*; cf. *Daśar.* I, 48: *udbhedo gūḍhabhedanam*.

67. See *ibid.*, p. 21: *atra bijasya punarāvartanāt saṁādhānaṁ nāma saṁdhyāṅgam uktaṁ bhavati*; cf. *Daśar.* I, 45: *bijāgamaḥ saṁādhānam*.

68. See *ibid.*, p. 21: *atraiva sukhagamanasya gamyamānatvāt prāptir nāma saṁdhyāṅgam uktaṁ bhavati*; cf. *Daśar.* I, 44: *prāptiḥ sukhāgamaḥ*.